

THE

# HISTORIAN

OF HANCOCK COUNTY

Bay Saint Louis, Mississippi

APRIL 2006

## APRIL HAPPENINGS

The April meeting will be held on Thursday, April 20, at the Lobrano House at 108 Cue Street. The guest speaker will be Mr. Charles Benvenuti, CPA, who will speak on the "Recovery, Rebuilding, and Renewal" of Bay Saint Louis. Please call for reservations at 467-4090. Seating is limited.

A Tax Credit Workshop will be held Tuesday, May 9, 2006, 6:00PM at the Kate Lobrano House. It will be conducted by the staff of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History and the Mississippi Main Street Associates.

Many thanks to those volunteers who participated in our yard clean-up project. Thanks go to Katie Gift, J'net Bonura, Harold Battelora, Doug St. Amant, Charles Gray and Melinda Richard.

A contract has been let on the electrical work at the Lobrano House. We are on our way to restoration.



**Mrs. Cora Davis**, widely known as Aunt Blue, life-time resident of Gainesville. She refused to move when NASA took over. Her house was loaded on the moving truck and hauled to its new location in South Picayune with all her belongings in it.

## S. G. Thigpen

Edited by Dale St. Amant

Clayton Rand, Mississippi author, editor and nationally famous columnist and lecturer wrote: "People for generations will be indebted to merchant-author S.G. Thigpen, for making his splendid contribution of a most readable record of pioneering South Mississippi literature."

Mr. Thigpen lived in Picayune, Mississippi, where he ran a successful hardware business.

Broadcasting a daily radio program from his store in Picayune and publishing *Thigpen's Store News*, his trick was to "advertise" for free in his paper and on his radio show. He claims this was the key to his success.

S.G. Thigpen wrote four books of folklore and colorful legends about the area and Hancock County.

These are: *Next Door To Heaven*; *Pearl River: Highway to Heaven*; *Ninety & One Years*; and *A Boy in Rural Mississippi*.





THE

**HISTORIAN**

OF HANCOCK COUNTY

Editor - Dale St. Amant

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**LOBRANO HOUSE  
HOURS**

MONDAY — FRIDAY  
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Closed from 12:00—1:00 .

**MISSION STATEMENT**

"TO PRESERVE THE GENERAL AND ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY OF HANCOCK COUNTY AND TO PRESERVE THE KATE LOBRANO HOUSE AND COLLECTIONS THEREIN; TO RESEARCH AND INTERPRET LIFE IN HANCOCK COUNTY; AND TO ENCOURAGE AN APPRECIATION OF AND INTEREST IN HISTORICAL PRESERVATION."

**A Few Typical Ads From  
*Thigpen's Store News***

**Wanted:** A woman to keep house for me. I have gas, electricity, water in the house. I live north of Seller's School. Some woman can get a good job with me. Orvis Ladner, Rt. 2, Perkinston

Whoever got my bean sticks down at the little sawmill, please bring them back or cut me some more. If whoever got them can't cut me some more, then come like a man and pay me for them. E. Greer, Nicholson

If you own a pig without ears would you come to my house and get him? Fred Mallett, Ozona

**IMPORTANT NOTICE:**

Someone stopped at Spring Branch Baptist Church and took the motor from the fan. We wonder why anyone would be so low down as to go into a church house and take something that don't belong to them. Please return this motor and go in to Thigpen Hardware Store and get yourself one. You can buy one there at reasonable terms, Spring Branch Baptist Church. By order of the congregation. Rev. Jimmie Lee, Pastor.

**Jokes, Stories, items from  
*Thigpen's Store News*.**

A train robber was holding up a Pullman car. "Out with your money or I'll kill all the men and kiss all the women." An old man jumped up and said, "You shall not touch these ladies." An old maid in an upper birth shouted, "You leave him alone, he's robbing this train."

**Father to daughter:** Your young man approached me and asked for your hand and I consented.

**Daughter:** But father, I don't wish to leave mother.

**Father:** Such a feeling displayed by a child is admirable. Take your mother with you.

**"Aunt Blue is Homesick"**

Excerpt from *A Boy in rural Mississippi and other Stories*

Mrs. Cora Davis became the most widely known of all the people who lived in Gainesville when NASA took over in 1963. The story of her refusing to move from her old home and the picture of her sitting in her rocking chair on the front porch as the moving truck carried her house from her lifetime home in Gainesville was printed in papers all over the country and was widely broadcast over radio and television.

When I went to see her to have her tell me more about the old days in Gainesville she said, "I am so dissatisfied and unhappy that I cannot compose myself long enough to think back, in an orderly way, of the old days or of anything else. Now if I was back home in Gainesville and had a rocking chair out under the old oaks where I lived the first 79 years of my life, I could tell you much more of the long ago in Gainesville."

Giving her a little time to recover from her acute nostalgia, Aunt Blue, the name by which she is affectionately and well known, began an interesting account of the old days in the now extinct old



river town, saying, "I'd give anything in the world to again row a boat up the river to old Cotton Box as I used to do, and on up two bends further to the Henley wood landing where the Henleys and others piled wood to sell to the steam boats plying up and down the river. I'd like to see if the Poitevent ditch is still there." She explained that Captain Bill Poitevent had a big ditch dug from East Pearl River to English Bayou in order to float logs over to his sawmill at Gainesville. Old Cotton Box was once the site of a cotton gin to which was shipped cotton on flat boats from up the river.

The heyday of the steamboats on Pearl River had passed when Mrs. Davis can first remember but there were still some boats on the river when she was a girl. She remembers that the Carrie B used to pass by loaded with rosin, turpentine, tar, etc. The Carrie B belonged to the Baileys who had a turpentine business about five miles northwest of Picayune. Even after the railroad came through, the Baileys continued to haul their products by boat but not for long. They soon found it quicker and more economical to ship by rail. In fact, the first name for Picayune was Bailey Switch, which had been put in by the railway company just north of the present depot for use of the Bailey company in shipping their naval stores products.

Because the Carrie B was losing its usefulness as a way of hauling on the river it was allowed to get into bad condition. Finally the day came when they could not profitably use the boat any longer but could not sell it because of its condition. When it became disabled near Gainesville the owners,

at the suggestion of Captain Mars of the Steamboat Earl, shoved it aside at what is called the eddy just above Gainesville. After standing there for sometime it burned to the water about 10 o'clock one night. The old hull stayed there in the water for many years. It could be seen when the water in the river was low. Bonnet leaves or lilies grew up around it and was a wonderful place to fish.

A smaller boat the Pearlington, owned and captained by Captain Rod Boardman of Pearlington, continued to operate into Gainesville until about 1920. This boat was known as the mail boat. It carried not only mail but also freight and passengers.

The mail boat was scheduled to arrive in Gainesville about 12 noon. It would blow at Harper's Bayou to notify all that it would arrive soon. Those expecting freight would hurry down to receive it. Those who were going south as passengers would know that the boat would soon arrive. If freight came in and there was no one there to receive it, it was locked up in a small warehouse to which Dud Carver had the key.

Capt. Boardman always ate his noon meal in Gainesville at Mrs. Bede Hollkman's home until she died. After that he took his noon meal at the home of the Peterman's until he stopped running the boat into Gainesville.

In the summer there were frequent visitors to Gainesville from New Orleans. They would board with families in the community, Aunt Blue said, "An old lady with an old maid daughter used to come out every summer

and stay a few weeks at our house. I was always glad to see them as I did not have to work while they were there. I was allowed to accompany the old maid on fishing trips along the river and in rambles in the woods."

"After Gainesville had gone down so much we began going to Logtown to trade at the big Weston store there. We would go down to Logtown in a buggy and ship our purchases back to Gainesville on the mail boat. We could not go on the boat ourselves because we would have had to stay all night. Sometimes we would go to Nicholson but we could not ship what we bought in Nicholson we had to carry it ourselves."

"After Mississippi passed the prohibition law in 1908 Gainesville became famous for a new reason. A floating bar called the Blue Goose was kept anchored on the Louisiana side of the river. It did a big business especially on weekends. Soon a man named Freeman came to Gainesville and built a bar across the river putting it on piling high enough to be above all overflow. I don't remember whether he bought the blue Goose or not but it was not long before the floating bar left. The new bar then became known as the Blue Goose. I f customers came who did not know how to row a boat or did not want to they rang the bell provided which would bring a man over to carry passengers in. Saturday was always a big day in Freeman's bar. Late in the afternoon on Saturdays men would often get on their horses and ride



toward home, yelling, and shooting their pistols. With all their roughness, though, no one ever bothered local people. If these visitors stayed long enough and got hungry they would cross the river and go to Carver's store and buy cheese, sardines, crackers, etc.

When prohibition first came to Mississippi the law was strictly enforced. People living out north, east and south of Gainesville over a wide area had no other place to go to get their wet goods which made business good for Freeman's bar. An old man who lived east of Picayune before his death told me that he went about once a month to the Blue Goose as long as it operated and bought his supply of whiskey. The Blue Goose was operating when I moved to Picayune in 1917 and continued for a number of years thereafter. Freeman died sometime after I came here. I remember seeing him make deposits in the bank of Picayune. He was a bachelor and after his death heirs from Texas came to Picayune and claimed a considerable amount of money in the bank.

Mrs. Davis said that so far as she knew only one man drowned in making the river crossing to the Blue Goose. It seems that when a man in the bar got too much liquor Freeman would send his helper to see him safely across the river.

Aunt Blue insisted that I say she calls herself the Old Witch from Gainesville but I am not going to do so. She is a most interesting person. She remembers the old days and likes to tell of them. She is a real personality in that she is strictly herself, al-

ways original in her thinking and in her remarks. I like to talk to her because I know I am going to hear interesting stories of the old days mixed in with the wisdom and understanding that comes only from long experience. The most interesting person in the world to me is that rare person who has not surrendered to the curse of conformity but continues to be himself—as a child does. That is why I like so much to talk to children, they are original and have not yet gotten into the rut of trying to be like everyone else.

The last thing Mrs. Davis said to me was, "Don't you think it is awful the way the government has gone and ruined dear old Gainesville?"

### **March 19, 1886 red letter day for City of Bay** (cont. from last month)

These and many other "nuisances" (boisterous and wanton or malicious knocking at or near the door or window of any residence, storehouse or business ..throwing of fal or scraps from the kitchen in culverts, gutters or on property of others) could at the discretion of the mayor, land an offender in jail for 30 days, cost him a fine of \$50 dollars and subject him to the embarrassment of a public court hearing.

Under Article 1, relating to offenses affecting "Good Morals and Decency" it was unlawful to appear in public places in a state of nudity or to bathe in such state in the day time in bay or sea, or to appear in public in dress of the other sex: or "To put up in any conspicuous place, any sign or advertisement of any patent medicine or other articles which shall be of such a nature as to be indelicate or offensive to ladies passing on the

streets or highways, (The city Marshal was charged with the added duty of removing such offensive signs.)

Privilege taxes were levied on all businesses from the oyster peddler (four dollars) to the soda water fountain (five dollars) on down to the transient vendor of bed springs (twelve dollars and fifty cents).

Citizens were required to list taxable property such as the number of horses, mules, sheep (over ten head), carriages and other wheeled vehicles, pianos, organs, melodeons and watches as well as guns (over one) and bowie knives and word canes.

Any furniture in excess of \$250 in value was taxable, also money on hand or on deposit or loaned must be accounted for!

The City Marshal was kept on a dead run in line of his several duties. He must be present at all meetings of the mayor and aldermen, notify members of all meetings – called or regular – clean the mayor's office and keep it comfortable and to provide for it fire and light when needed. In his spare time he was to "perform such other duties as may be required of him by the Mayor and Alderman."

Aldermen were paid two dollars for each regular meeting actually attended when present at roll call. Other costs of running the city were considerable, on Section 30 of the Charter it was "further enacted, that the Mayor shall for his services receive a salary of not more than three hundred dollars nor less than one hundred dollars per annum." Under caption Revised Ordinances,



Chapter XII and Sec. 91 in relation to salaries and fees: "The officers of the city shall receive as compensation for their services, the following salaries, payable out of the city treasury by warrant:

1. The Secretary, two hundred and fifty dollars per annum.
2. The collector, five percent on all collections to be retained by him in settlements.
3. The Assessor, seven per centum upon the amount of his assessments for his services; provided that such compensation shall not be less than fifty dollars or more than one hundred dollars, to be paid on completion and approval of the assessment rolls.
4. The Treasurer shall be allowed two and one half percentum on all money received by him for city purposes, except what he may receive by him for city purposes, except what he may receive from his predecessor in office.
5. The City Marshal two hundred and forty dollars per annum.
6. The Street Commissioner, eight dollars per month.

The Secretary for copies or transcripts from the books or other of official papers got the handsome sum of ten cents per hundred words.

Minutes of the meetings of the Mayor and Board of Aldermen were written with painstaking care with indelible ink for the most part in fine well-formed Spenserian script. Platt Rogers Spencer who

taught the Spenserian Method of Penmanship – may his name be praised. The minutes are legible!"

### BAY ST. LOUIS MEMORIES

#### A LETTER FROM TOMMY CROSSLIN

My name is Tommy Crosslin and I live in Sparta, Tennessee. I was born in Biloxi and my first home was Bay St. Louis. After moving to Tennessee, I would anxiously await the end of school so I could catch a train to Bay St. Louis to spend the summers with my grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. N. M. Dick, who both worked for the railroad. Their home on 113 Union Street was magic to me. Being able to see the water from their front porch was overwhelming for a young boy growing up in Tennessee.

Awaiting me when I got off the train was a bowl of fresh figs from the tree in the back yard and a cold Barq's root beer, which at the time could only be purchased on the coast. I would spend my days walking what would later be called "old town". The mid to late 60's (pre-Camille) in Bay St. Louis were indeed, magic. Nightly trips up Beach Boulevard in front of St. Stanislaus to the Star Theater and then across the street afterwards for a snow cone were the things dreams were made of, even if I did see the same movie several nights in a row.

Another memory for a teen-age boy was all the beautiful girls of Bay St. Louis. This made such an impression on me that years later, I would meet a Mississippi girl while in pharmacy

school in Birmingham and marry her. She was from the small Jasper County town of Louin and to my great fortune, only a couple of hours from the coast.

As our three children grew up, we would make frequent trips to Bay St. Louis and share the magic of the town with them. Our children grew to love the Bay as I had, and each trip to the grandparents came complete with a request to visit your beautiful town. I was only too glad to oblige.

The most recent trip was for our middle son and his girl friend over this past Memorial Day weekend. We went to church at Our Lady of the Gulf, stopped by St. Stanislaus for pictures with the church in the background and then to Trapani's for a "Po-boy".

Shortly after we returned to Tennessee they announced their engagement. I joked that the trip to Bay St. Louis had sealed the deal! Your beautiful town had once again worked its magic. Oh, our first son who is now in medical school at Ohio State married his college girlfriend who had vacationed with us previously in Bay St. Louis, so the magic struck twice!

When I lost my brother in a car wreck in 2001, my parents wanted his memory to live forever. It did not take them long to decide the place for a scholarship in his memory was St. Stanislaus. The school will remain forever special to us for many reasons, this being the most special one.

Our youngest child,  
our



only daughter, took her best friend on vacation with us four years ago to experience the magic of your town.

We went to the Dock of the Bay to eat and met Jerry Fisher, a very kind and likable man, who granted my request for a photo "op". Being a Blood Sweat and Tears fan growing up, I experienced the magic again by meeting a band member; I still cherish the memories of that trip, and watching my youngest child fall in love with the same town I loved as a child and adult.

My family met and befriended Charles Gray of the His-

torical Society. It has been from Charles that I have received the most information regarding the damage to the town. Charles confirmed my fears that many of the lovely buildings, including the Baytown Inn, which my wife and I dearly loved, were now gone. I just received a nice e-mail from the owner, Nikki, telling us the Inn was gone, but the 'spirit of the town was strong', her words were very uplifting.

From my memories as a child going to the beach, walking the curbs along the sidewalks, watching the trains go by, to my memories as an adult of sitting on

the front porch visiting with our dear friend, Dot Phillips watching my children experience the magic and tasting the "po-boys" at Trapani's after a beautiful worship service at Our Lady of the Gulf, I know that no town will ever be as special to me as Bay St. Louis.

When I was talking with our middle son last night and telling him of the widespread damage, he sighed and said, "The magic is gone." But the magic is not within the buildings; it is within the people, the great people who make up your beautiful town. Please know that each and everyone of you are in our thoughts and

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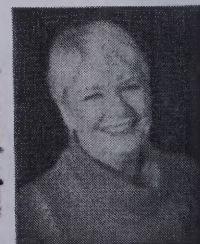
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prayers as you work to "Bring back the Magic".

We love you,  
**Tommy and Karen Crosslin and family**

Mr. Crosslin and his wife Karen are members of the Hancock County Historical Society and wished to share their fond memories of Bay St. Louis with all of us. Thank you, Tommy and Karen.

If you would like to share your thoughts and/or memories of living in Bay St. Louis, we would love to include them in the next issue. You can email us or use snail mail! Our new email address is hancockcountyhis@bellsouth.net.

Also check out our website at [www.2datasync.com/history](http://www.2datasync.com/history). We are in the process of updating, so please be patient.

### PEARSON FOUNDATION PUBLISHES BOOK

Bay Waveland Middle School students under the direction of Ms Sandra Reed and Ms Gina Pepperman, are assisting in the creation of a photographic history of Bay St. Louis. The students took pictures, wrote stories, and researched material at the historical society with the help of Charles Gray and Eddie Coleman.

Mr. Erik Gregory of the Pearson Foundation of San Francisco, California is in charge of the project. AmeriCorps workers Andy Lewis, Ben Lewis, and Seth Everts have been hired by the foundation to help expedite the process.

Proceeds from the sale of the book will go to Bay Waveland Middle School and the Hancock County Historical Society.

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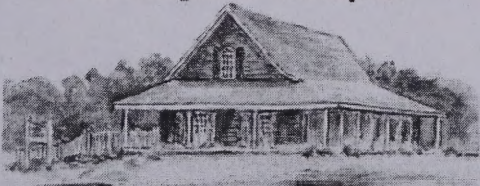
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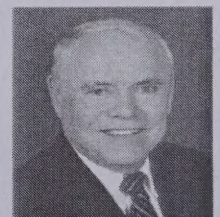
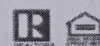


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## HANCOCK COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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